

WI-634  
Wicomico High School  
Salisbury  
Private

1929-31

Three stories high and twenty-five bays across, the former Wicomico High School on East Main Street stands as a prominent testimony to the significant improvement in the county's educational facilities concurrent with the explosive expansion of Salisbury's population prior to World War II. Since the early twentieth century the white high school students attended the Upton Street School, a prominent two-story brick facility erected in 1904-05 that was expanded in 1914 in order to serve the needs of the growing city. However, by the mid 1920s the Upton Street School no longer provided adequate space or facilities for a modern high school. A state appropriation through the legislature was sought for funding a new building.

By October 1929 the Baltimore architectural firm of Smith & May, which had designed the state's new Normal School on Camden Avenue Extended, submitted to the building commission an ambitiously scaled and well appointed school designed to serve 1,000 students with 83 classrooms, a 900-seat auditorium, library, and cafeteria. Upon its completion in two stages two years later, the Flemish bond brick structure, executed in a five-part main elevation, was lauded as one of the best educational facilities in the state. On the night of December 10, 1931, a distinguished group of city, county, and state officials formally accepted the building. In a presentation to the assembled audience, Howard H. Ruark, secretary for the building commission, reviewed the history of the project from its inception as a bond issue. The newspaper, The Wicomico News, reported that

*On behalf of the commission he [Ruark] expressed appreciation to Senator D. J. Ward, the members of the House of Delegates, the County Commissioners, the Parent Teachers Association, Smith & May Co., architects and F. H. Dryden, consulting engineer, and to the sub-contractors including Lewis Morgan & Son and L. W. Gunby Co.*

Many of the building's modern features were enumerated; including connections in each classroom for a radio as well as equipment in the auditorium for silent or sound motion pictures.

Instead of designing the building in the Colonial style like the former high school and the new Normal School, Smith & May approached the design in an Art Deco scheme centering on a colossal columned center pavilion dominated by two limestone columns with acanthus leaf capitals. The limestone front of the center pavilion is enriched with a band of stylized Art Deco low relief carving, and the transom above the door features Art Deco inspired metalwork. Inscribed in the limestone entablature in bold block letters is WICOMICO HIGH SCHOOL. The flanking sections, executed in Flemish bond brick, are punctuated with rows of rectangular window openings topped by undercut jack arches. Built into the slope of a bank, the three-story front was terminated on each end with projecting end pavilions featuring large limestone block panels and shallow pediment parapets.

Despite the auspicious size of the new high school in 1931, the ever-expanding population of Salisbury required sizable additions within a few years. Salisbury's population continued to grow steadily following World War II with extensive neighborhood construction on each side of the city, and at the same time, the county-

wide high schools were consolidated. Ultimately, a wave of school construction in the mid twentieth century provided a group of new facilities for the white and black students in the county. The East Main Street building was converted into a middle school after a campus-style high school was completed on the east side of the city.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. WI-634

### 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Wicomico High School, Salisbury High School  
other Wicomico Middle School

### 2. Location

street and number East Main Street ☐ not for publication  
city, town Salisbury vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
county Wicomico

### 3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Wicomico County  
street and number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city, town Salisbury state Maryland zip code 21801

### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber \_\_\_\_\_ folio \_\_\_\_\_  
city, town Salisbury tax map \_\_\_\_\_ tax parcel \_\_\_\_\_ tax ID number \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Classification

#### Category

☐ district  
☒ building(s)  
☐ structure  
☐ site  
☐ object

#### Ownership

☒ public  
☐ private  
☐ both

#### Current Function

☐ agriculture ☐ landscape  
☐ commerce/trade ☐ recreation/culture  
☐ defense ☐ religion  
☐ domestic ☐ social  
☒ education ☐ transportation  
☐ funerary ☐ work in progress  
☐ government ☐ unknown  
☐ health care ☐ vacant/not in use  
☐ industry ☐ other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Resource Count

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<u>      </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of Contributing Resources  
previously listed in the Inventory  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

Inventory No. WI-634

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

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Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The former Wicomico High School, now known as Wicomico Middle School, is located on the north side of East Main Street and south of MD Route 50 in Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. The bank-sited three-story, twenty-five bay brick school faces south.

Erected in several stages, the oldest portion is a three-story, 256' by 148' Flemish bond brick structure sited on the southern slope of a bank. The south front is a symmetrical three-story, twenty-five bay elevation divided in a five-part façade with a center entrance pavilion. The east and north sides of the main block are two-story elevations. The building is covered by a flat roof disguised by a series of parapet walls. Attached to the north and west sides are mid twentieth-additions. Providing access off East Main Street is a circular entrance.

The south (main) elevation is a symmetrical twenty-five bay façade with a three-bay center entrance pavilion executed in limestone and Flemish bond brick construction. Two colossal columns rise to each side of a center door topped by large metalwork transom executed in an Art Deco design. The doors are metal and glass replacements. The colossal columns front a limestone wall pierced by metal window openings and decorated with a low-relief band of Art Deco design between the first and second stories. Finishing the tops of each column is a stylized acanthus design capital. The outside corners of the center pavilion are executed in Flemish bond brickwork with limestone capitals of low relief Art Deco inspired carving. Stretching across atop the third story is a limestone entablature inscribed, WICOMICO HIGH SCHOOL. Rising atop the entablature is a shallow pediment parapet wall executed in limestone as well. Flanking the entrance pavilion are series of eight-bay sections marked by metal windows topped by jack arches with undercut segmental arches. Between stories are limestone beltcourses surrounded by Flemish bond brick walls. The top of the parapet wall is finished with a limestone cap. The outer bays on each end are defined by projecting three-bay pavilions with large limestone panels marking the second and third stories. The first floors are marked by metal window openings spanned by undercut jack arches. The top of each end pavilion is finished with a shallow pediment executed in Flemish bond brick with a limestone cap.

The east side of the school has a ground-level entrance framed in a plain neoclassical surround, and a set of steps leads to a second story entrance framed by a plain neoclassical surround. Both entrances surrounds are executed in limestone. Bank of metal windows topped by jack arches light each story. The Flemish bond walls are accented with limestone beltcourses that stretch across the wall surface at the second and third floor levels.

The back of the 1929-1931 school is completely covered by later brick additions. Mid twentieth century additions have expanded the school to the west.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. WI-634

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates

Architect/Builder

Smith &amp; May, Baltimore

Construction dates 1929-1931

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register☐ Maryland Register☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Three stories high and twenty-five bays across, the former Wicomico High School on East Main Street stands as a prominent testimony to the significant improvement in its educational facilities concurrent with the expansion of Salisbury's population prior to World War II. Since the early twentieth century the white high school students attended the Upton Street School, a two-story 1904-05 brick facility that had been expanded in 1914 in order to serve the needs of a growing city. By the mid to late 1920s the Upton Street High School no longer provided adequate space and a state appropriation was sought for a new high school.

By October 1929 the Baltimore architectural firm of Smith & May, which had designed the state's new Normal School on Camden Avenue, submitted an ambitiously scaled and appointed high school designed to serve 1,000 students with 83 classrooms, 900-seat auditorium, library, and cafeteria. Upon its completion two years later, the Flemish bond brick structure, executed with a five-part main elevation, was lauded as one of the best educational facilities in the state. On the night of December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1931, a distinguished group of city, county, and state officials formally accepted the building. In a presentation to the assembled audience, Howard H. Ruark, secretary of the building commission, reviewed the history of the project from its inception as a bond issue. The newspaper, The Wicomico News, reported that

*On behalf of the commission he [Ruark] expressed appreciation to Senator D. J. Ward, the members of the House of Delegates, the County Commissioners, the Parent Teachers Association, Smith & May Co., architects and F. H. Dryden, consulting engineer, and to the sub-contractors including Lewis Morgan & Son and L. W. Gunby Co<sup>1</sup>.*

Many of the building's modern features were described, including connections in each classroom for a radio as well as equipment in the auditorium for silent or sound motion pictures.

Instead of designing the building in the Colonial style like the former high school and the new normal school, Smith & May approached the building in an Art Deco scheme centering on a colossal columned center pavilion dominated by two limestone columns with acanthus leaf capitals. The

<sup>1</sup> The Wicomico News, 10 December 1931.

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limestone front of the center pavilion was enriched with a band of stylized Art Deco low relief carving, and the transom above the door was enriched with Art Deco inspired metalwork. Inscribed in the limestone entablature in bold block letters is WICOMICO HIGH SCHOOL. The flanking sections, executed in Flemish bond brick, are punctuated with rows of rectangular windows topped by undercut jack arches. Built into the slope of a bank, the three-story front was terminated at each end with projecting end pavilions featuring large limestone block panels and shallow pediment parapets.

Despite the auspicious size of the new high school in 1931 the ever-expanding population of Salisbury required sizable additions within a few years.<sup>2</sup> Salisbury's population continued to expand following World War II with extensive neighborhood construction on each side of the city, and at the same time the county-wide high schools were consolidated. Ultimately, a wave of school construction in the in mid twentieth century provided new a group of new facilities for the white and black students in the county. The East Main Street facility was converted into a middle school after a campus-style high school was completed on the east of the city.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard W. Cooper, *Salisbury in Times Gone By*, Baltimore, Maryland: Gateway Press, Inc., 1991, p. 40.

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Name Wicomico High School  
**Continuation Sheet**

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*The Wicomico News*, October 3, 1929

### SCHOOL COMMISSION GETS ARCHITECTS PLANS FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING HERE

Fireproof Brick Structure Will Have Frontage of Approximately 256 Feet on East Main Street And A  
Depth of 148 Feet

Auditorium To Seat Upwards Of 900 Persons, Large Library, Cafeteria And Gymnasium Are Provided For;  
Part of Building is Three Stories, Awaits Final Approval

Architectural plans for the new Salisbury High School, which with a few minor changes have met approval of the School Commission, provides a building of 33 classrooms, auditorium, gymnasium, library, Cafeteria, manual training, home economics and commercial departments, boys and girls locker rooms and showers and other features recognized as essential to a modern educational institution.

The rectangular building is to have a frontage on East Main street of 256 feet and a depth of 148 feet. The main entrance is 200 feet from the street and is approached by a semi-circular driveway and walks.

Smith and May, noted Baltimore architects, employed to design the building in conformity to contour of the site have assured the commission that the building can be constructed by next August, which would permit a month for installation of furniture and equipment.

The new high school at Hebron is expected to be ready for occupancy about the middle of next November. Attention of the Board of Education will next be devoted to the proposed colored industrial high school here and the high school at Pittsville, both of which will also be ready for use at the beginning of the school year next September.

The Salisbury High School is to be of fireproof brick construction of the same quality as the Salisbury Normal School, though not of the Colonial type. The west wing and central portion of the building will be three and the east wing will be two stories.

The building is so arranged that natural ventilation and light is afforded every room of the structure. Face brick, rather than plaster may be used in the wide corridors to make for greater durability. Four exits have been provided.

On the first floor, to the right of the main entrance will be located the commercial department in a suite of three rooms to be devoted to typewriting, bookkeeping, and shorthand. Left of the entrance are two class rooms and the Home Economics department. Down the west corridor is the Manual Training department, a room 56 by 24 feet and opposite it is the locker room, dressing room and showers for both girls and boys. At the northern end of the corridor is a cafeteria and service room occupying a space 80 by 40 feet.

The first or ground floor extends only under the three story section of the building.

The auditorium, designed to seat 850 to 900 persons is on the second floor, just a few feet above the main entrance. This is provided with a balcony, which contains a projection room, and stage in the opposite

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end. Here as on the third floor, boys' lockers and comfort room are located in the west side and similar accommodations for girls on the east side of the building.

The high school library, already declared by educational authorities to be the best in the state, is to have a front room on the second floor 23 by 80 feet.

Eleven class rooms are located on that floor with the principal's office, doctor's office and anterooms.

Occupying the space above the cafeteria and having a ceiling two stories in height is the gymnasium.

Fifteen class rooms are located on the third floor. A suite of rooms for the sciences, including chemical laboratory occupy five of the seven front rooms here.

The lot which the building is to be erected borders on E. William, Davis and East Main streets, with an entrance also from Commerce street. The municipal park of 58 acres is directly across East Main and the water pumping station and filtration plant southeast of the school.

Changes suggested by the school commission are of a minor nature and will not affect the scheme.

*The Wicomico News*, 23 July 1931.

### HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX MAY BE READY BY OCTOBER

Students Will Be Transferred As Soon As Construction Work Is Completed  
Other Building Designated As Upton St. School and Contains Upper Grammar Grades

The construction of an addition to the new high school on East Main street will not be complete for occupancy when the white public schools open September 1 and location of grades in the various city schools will be somewhat similar to the status at the close of last school year, county superintendent James M. Bennett said today.

The transfers will be made, however, as soon as all the high school students can be accommodated at the new building, which probably will be about October first.

The new building will be known as Wicomico high and the old high school as Upton Street School.

In the old building will be located the upper grammar school grades which includes fifth, sixth and seventh year classes, after all high school students are transferred to East Main street.

Wicomico High will have about 700 students. The number to be enrolled at Upton Street school is indeterminate, since there is no means of ascertaining how many students will enter the elementary grades at the beginning of the year.

The Upton Street school, it was pointed out, will not accommodate all of the upper grammar grade students and some will to attend at other schools.

Before the completion of the additions at Wicomico High that building is accommodating all high school students from the city except a part of the freshman class. The addition provides additional

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Name Wicomico High School  
**Continuation Sheet**

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classrooms, gymnasium and cafeteria.

*The Wicomico News*, December 10, 1931

### NEW SCHOOL RANKED AMONG STATE'S BEST

State Supervisor Declares Structure Well Adapted to Needs of City

### SPEAKERS PRAISE SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Building Commission Presents School At Formal Dedication Ceremonies

The new high school building on East Main street was accepted by the county Board of Education and dedicated at formal ceremonies in the school auditorium Monday night.

Howard H. Ruark, secretary of the building commission, in announcing to the board that the commission's work was completed, reviewed history of the project from the time movement was first started for a bond issue to provide the revenue.

On behalf of the commission he expressed appreciation to Senator D. J. Ward, the members of the House of Delegates, the County Commissioners, the Parent Teachers Association, Smith & May Co. architects and F. H. Dryden, consulting engineer, and to the sub-contractors including Lewis Morgan & Son and L. W. Gunby Co.

L. W. Gunby, president of the board, accepting the building, praised Dr. Albert S. Cooke, state superintendent of schools; Dr. Wm J. Holloway, principal of the State Normal School, and E. Clarke Fontaine, state supervisor of high schools.

Mr. Gunby expressed desire to see W. F. Allen, vice-president of the County Commissioners, succeed him as head of the School Board.

Other speakers were: Mr. Allen, Mrs. Harry L. Harcum, Mayor Wade H. Insley.

Mr. Fontaine, speaking for Dr. Cooke who could not attend the ceremonies, declared the new building is one of the most modern in the state and is well adapted to the purposes for which it is to be used.

Much praise for the achievements of James M. Bennett, county superintendent of schools, who presided, was voiced by speakers.

Incorporating all the physical features of a modern educational structure, the new school building has as a capacity of 1,000 students. In the various departments are 83 classrooms each with modern fixtures, including connections for a radio.

The auditorium has a capacity for 900 and a stage large enough for a graduating class of more than the members. It is so constructed that silent or sound motion pictures may be shown there.

The gymnasium has floor space of 40 by 80 feet. Adjacent are boys' and girls' dressing rooms and showers.

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Name Wicomico High School  
**Continuation Sheet**

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A cafeteria and kitchen will accommodate 350 persons at a single sitting. A complete fire alarm system has been installed.

The Wicomico High School library, said by school authorities to be the most complete in the state, has adequate quarters in the new building.

In the construction, cement has been used instead of plaster making the building as nearly fire-proof as possible. Ceilings, stairways and floors are of cement reinforced by steel.

Expenditure of the \$410,000 made available for the school was turned over to the City School Commission which approved the plans and supervised erection. Dr. E. Riall White was chairman, Howard H. Ruark secretary and Paul E. Watson, the third member.

The speakers on the program at the dedication ceremonies tonight are: Mr. Ruark, L. W. Gunby, president of the Board of Education; Dr. Albert S. Cooke, state superintendent of schools; W. F. Allen, vice-president board of County Commissioners; Mayor Wade H. Insley, Senator D. J. Ward and Mrs. Harry L. Harcum.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Inventory No. WI-634

*The Wicomico News*, 3 October 1929.

*The Wicomico News*, 23 July 1931.

*The Wicomico News*, 19 November 1931.

*The Wicomico News*, 10 December 1931.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 2 acres  
Acreage of historical setting 3 acres  
Quadrangle name Salisbury, Maryland

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The metes and bounds of this property are coincidental with the current boundary of the lot.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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name/title	Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian		
organization	Private Consultant	date	11/10/2001
street & number	P. O. Box 5	telephone	410-651-1094
city or town	Westover	state	Maryland 21871

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

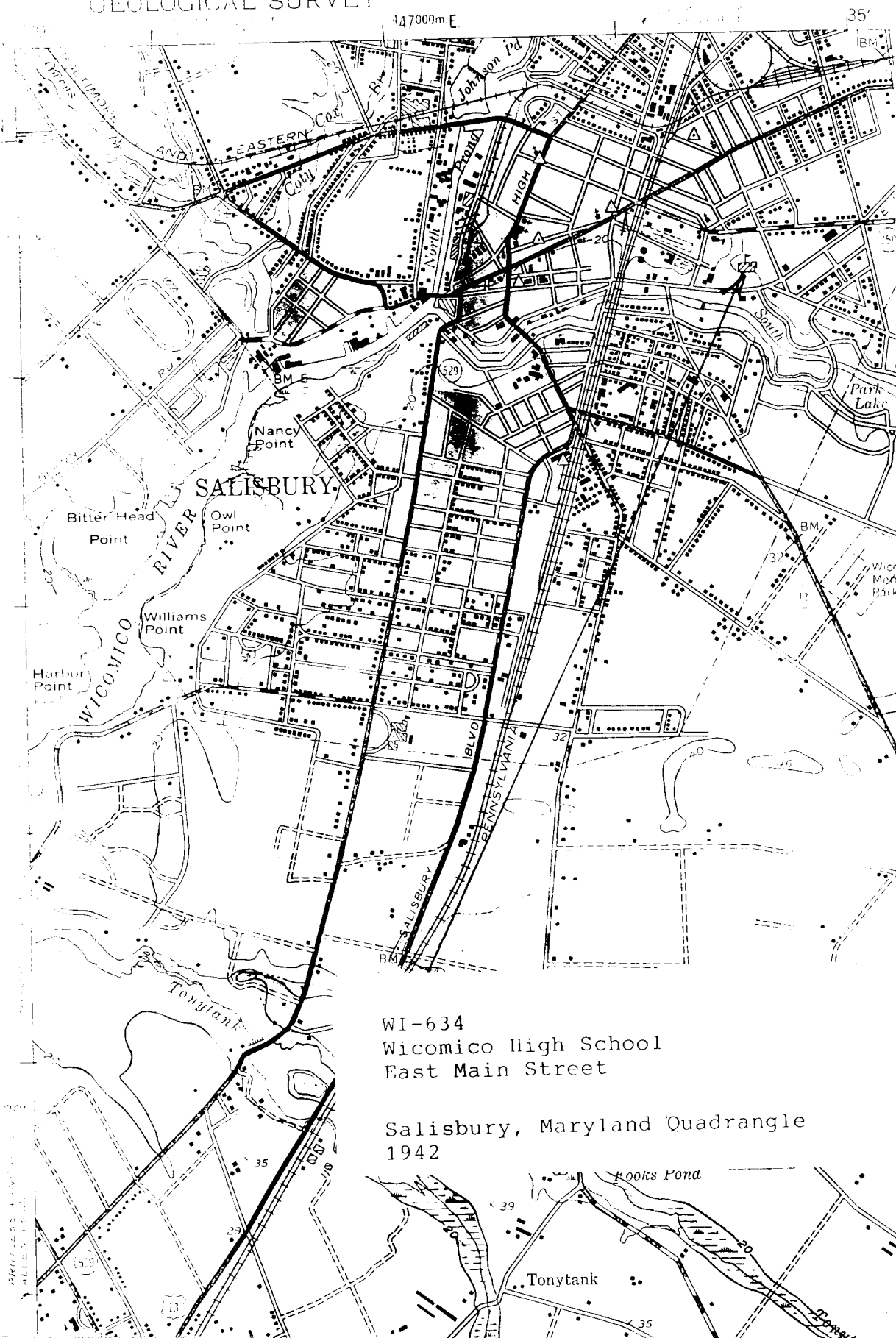
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

447000m E





VI-634

Wicomico Arch. Section (Wicomico Arch. Section)  
P.O. Box 10, MD

John ...

11/01, Pam Touart, Potomac

NOV. 1 MD. HISTORICAL TRUST

11/15



WI-634

Wisconsin State Route (Wisconsin  
Middle

Salisbury, Wisconsin Co. (Salem)

SOUTH ELEVATION - ENTRANCE

Pavilion

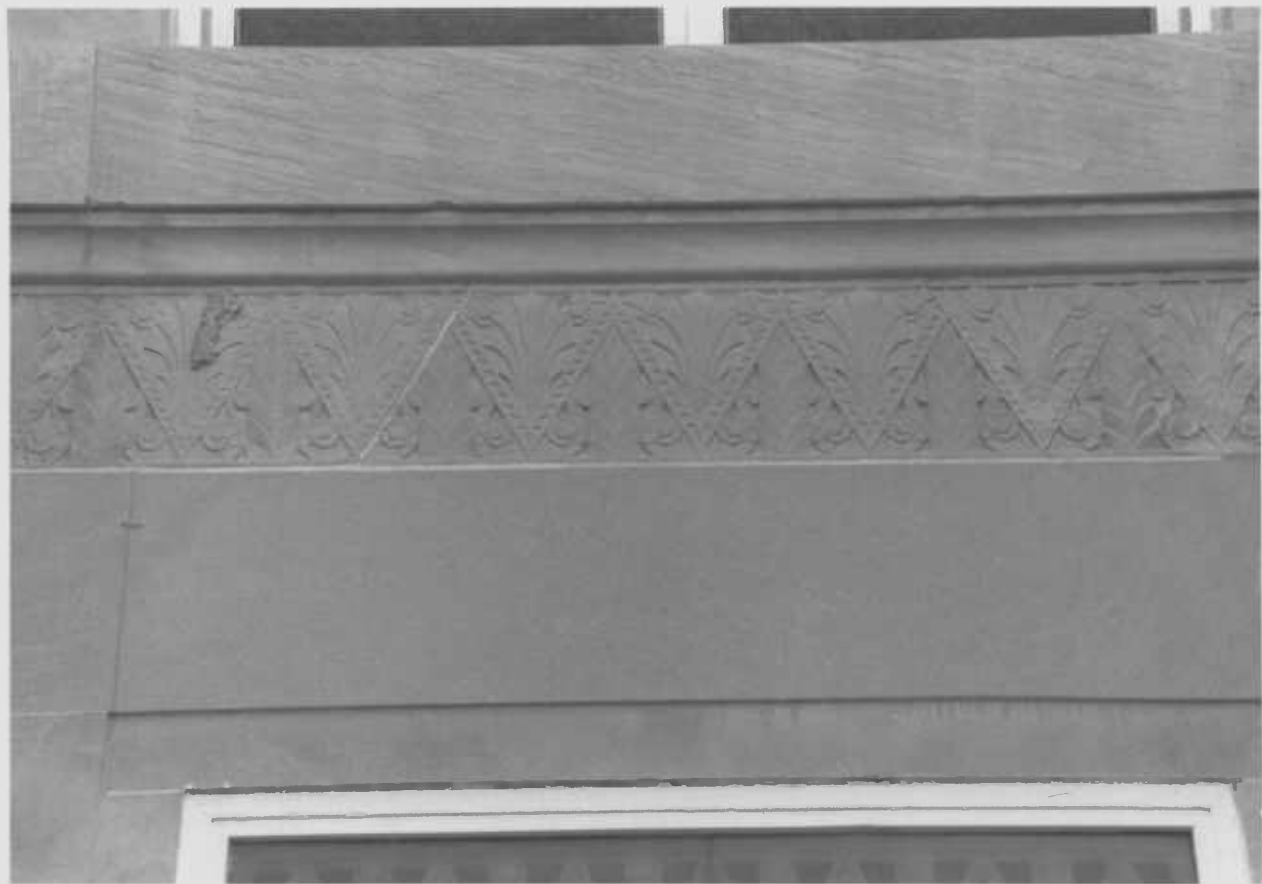
11/01, Park Point, Wisconsin

N.E. / 200 observation tower

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W1-634

Wiconisco High School

(Wiconisco Middle School)

Salisbury, Wiconisco Co., N.S.

ART DELO LUN BRIEF CARVING ON  
ENTRANCE PAVILION

11/01, PAUL TOWART, PORTER

WICH. / W.D. HISTORICAL TRUST

4 OF 5



W10634

Wicomico High School  
(Wicomico Middle School)

South Station of Annapolis

11/01, PANE TOWNT, PHOTOGRAPHED

NEAR MD HISTORICAL TRAIL -

5 OF 5